

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 041045Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8138

S E C R E T TUNIS 0722

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, TS

SUBJECT: BOURGUIBA VISIT

REF: STATE 022096

1. UPON RECEIPT REFTEL JANUARY 31, AMBASSADOR CALLED ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER KOOLI, WHO STATED HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY CONTACT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IN FRANCE. SINCE KOOLI FAILED TO PROVIDE RESPONSE OVER WEEK-END, WE ASSUMED MATTER WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

2. YESTERDAY, FEB 3, MINISTER-DIRECTOR OF PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, CHEDLI KLIBI, RETURNED TO TUNIS AND REQUESTED AMBASSADOR CALL ON HIM AT PALACE MORNING FEB 4. HOWEVER, IN COURSE OF EVENING FEB 3 AMBASSADOR ALI HEDDA INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT KLIBI WAS ENDEAVROING TO REACH HIM BY TELEPHONE. IN SUBSEQUENT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION KLIBI INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA WOULD BE UNDERGOING INTENSIVE MEDICAL TESTS IN PARIS IN COURSE OF NEXT FEW DAYS AND THEREFORE REPLY WOULD NOT BE FORTHCOMING UNTIL NEXT WEEK-END.

3. AMBASSADOR INQUIRED WHETHER DELAYED RESPONSE IMPLIED THAT PRESIDENT MIGHT CANCEL VIST IN RESPONSE TO ADVISE OF DOCTORS. KLIBI SAID NO, THAT MAY 1 WAS OK "IN PRINCIPLE" BUT IN VIEW OF "SIX-HOUR" TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TUNISIA AND U.S. IT WAS NECESSARY THAT PRESIDENT UNDERGO THOROUGH

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MEDICAL CHECK-UP BEFORE GIVING GO-AHEAD. KLIBI SAID HE

EXPECTS TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE DEFINITE RESPONSE BY SATURDAY,
FEB 8.

4. COMMENT: BOURGUIBA, JR. AND ALI HEDDA HAVE BEEN
DISCUSSING POSSIBILITY THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA MIGHT CROSS
ATLANTIC BY SHIP IN ORDER TO "GRADUALIZE" TIME CHANGE
EFFECT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT PRESIDENT'S CURRENT MEDICAL
CONSULTATIONS ARE DESIGNED TO DETERMINE WHETHER HE MAY FLY
OR WHETHER IT ADVISABLE THAT HE GO AND RETURN BY SHIP.
IN LATTER CASE, OF COURSE, HE WOULD HAVE TO ALLOW HIMSELF
EXTRA TIME FOR SEA VOYAGE. WITH ROMANIAN PRESIDENT
SCHEDULED TO VISIT TUNISIA DURING THIRD WEEK OF
APRIL, WITH PRESIDENT NUMEIRY OF SUDAN HAVING EXPRESSED
INTEREST IN VISITING TUNISIA LATER IN APRIL,
AND IN LIGHT OF OTHER PLANS IN MAY,
TUNISIAN OFFICIALS PRESUMABLY WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH TIME
THEY MUST RESERVE FOR BOURGUIBA'S U.S. VISIT BEFORE FINALIZING
APRIL AND MAY PROGRAMS. IF BOURGUIBA WERE TO GO TO U.S.
BY SHIP, HE WOULD OBVIOUSLY AT MINIMUM HAVE TO RESCHEDULE PRO-
POSED NUMEIRY VISIT IN ORDER TO MAKE MAY 1 DATE.
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